

Sermon for March 1, 2026 – Lent 2

Genesis 12:1-8 (EHV)

**Theme: Let God's Promises Move You to:**

- 1) Take His Word to heart,
- 2) Act on His promised grace,
- 3) Persevere in all hope.

*Now the LORD said to Abram, "Get out of your country and away from your relatives and from your father's house and go to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great. You will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse anyone who dishonors you. All of the families of the earth will be blessed in you." <sup>4</sup>So Abram went, as the LORD had told him. Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. <sup>5</sup>Abram took Sarai his wife, Lot his brother's son, and all the possessions they had accumulated and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to travel to the land of Canaan. Eventually they arrived in the land of Canaan. <sup>6</sup>Abram passed through the land until he came to the Oak of Moreh at the place called Shechem. The Canaanites were in the land at that time. <sup>7</sup>The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants." Abram built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. <sup>8</sup>He moved on from there to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent there, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and proclaimed the name of the LORD.*

Every time I try a strange new food, I want to share the experience with my family. Even though they are often adventurous, they don't always take me up on my offer because they don't always trust my taste.

But if Gordon Ramsay offered them the same food, promising they would like it, they'd try it. Why? Because he's a famous chef. He knows what's good.

If we trust a respected chef when he asks us to try something strange, how much more when it is the perfect, holy, almighty LORD?

Today, the LORD invites you to taste and see that He is good.<sup>1</sup> Even when He asks you to do something strange or scary, you can trust that the outcome will be magnificent. Why? Because the LORD is faithful to all He says.

With the example of Abram as our guide, let the Holy Spirit encourage you to trust Him, under the theme:

**Let God's Promises Move you to:**

- 1) Take His Word to Heart,
- 2) Act on His Promised Grace,
- 3) Persevere in all Hope.

## Part One: Take His Word to Heart

Because the Bible calls Abram the father of all who believe,<sup>ii</sup> you might assume he grew up in a family that worshipped the LORD. The truth, however, is very different. The Bible says his father served other gods!<sup>iii</sup>

Yet the LORD loved Abram and didn't want him to die as an unbeliever. So, what did the LORD do? He appeared to Abram and called him to follow Him.

Abram trusted the LORD – so much so that he left his homeland of Ur (located in Iraq) to travel hundreds of miles with his extended family to a place called Haran (the southern border of modern-day Turkey).<sup>iv</sup>

Abram made a life for his family in Haran; but after his father died, the LORD appeared to Abram a second time and said to him:

*“Get out of your country and away from your relatives and from your father’s house and go to the land that I will show you.”*

Picture how difficult this must have been. Yes, Abram had moved before when he was younger, but now he's 75 years old. The move God asked him to make was not across town; it was to an unknown place surrounded by the unfamiliar.

Can you imagine tearfully telling your beloved family goodbye, as you literally head off to only God knows where?

How could God expect Abram to do what He asked? The same way He can expect it from you.

Spiritually speaking, your backstory is not unlike Abram's. We were all born in unbelief and sin, not knowing the true God until He revealed Himself to us.

For some of us, that happened as infants, through Holy Baptism. For others, it happened later in life, when the Holy Spirit used His Word to move us to repent and believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Regardless of when or how it happened, the same LORD who called Abram to faith has called you as well.

And, just as the LORD asked Abram to leave his family, friends, and life behind to follow Him to an unknown land, so the LORD asks the same of you: to abandon worldly desires<sup>v</sup> and the godless culture in which you live to follow Him in repentant faith.<sup>vi</sup>

Yes, the LORD even bids you to love Him more than your own family – willing to sacrifice their love and acceptance to remain faithful to Christ.<sup>vii</sup>

But that seems impossible. What moves us to such action? The same thing that moved Abram: God's promises.

The LORD said to Abram:

<sup>2</sup>*I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great. You will be a blessing.*  
<sup>3</sup>*I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse anyone who dishonors you.*

The LORD swore to give Abram extraordinary things. He, who was childless, would have descendants too numerous to count! He who was not well known among his contemporaries would be famous throughout time. God would bless Abram with so much that he could help others in need.

But the best and most amazing promise God offered Abram was this:

*"All of the families of the earth will be blessed in you."*

One of Abram's descendants would be the Saviour God promised Adam and Eve after they fell into sin. Not only would He perfectly keep God's law on our behalf, but He would also take all our sins upon Himself – our record of greed, selfishness, doubt, denial, hate, and rebellion – and pay for them through His cross. Having died, He would rise to life again – proving that every sin has been forgiven.

Yes, Jesus is *"the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*<sup>viii</sup> His work reconciled to God every person who has or ever will exist – the blessings of which we receive only through faith in Him.

The LORD not only gave Abram amazing promises, but He has blessed you with them as well. As the LORD called Abram, He calls you to follow Him in faith – vowing to forgive your sins in Christ, bless you with daily bread, watch over your life, and allow you to be a blessing to others. Best of all, He offers you everlasting life with Him in the perfect paradise He will call into existence on the Last Day.

The LORD has given you extraordinary promises! What are you going to do with them?

I pray you take them to heart and, like Abram, act on God's promised grace.

Part Two: Act on His promised Grace.

We read:

<sup>4</sup>*So Abram went, as the LORD had told him. Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.* <sup>5</sup>*Abram took Sarai his wife, Lot his brother's son, and all the possessions they had accumulated and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to travel to the land of Canaan. Eventually they arrived in the land of Canaan.*

Despite having many excuses not to follow God's command, Abram packed up and went, leaving every family member behind except his wife and nephew. Even though he didn't know where he was going, He trusted God to guide him. The LORD's promised grace moved him to act.

What the LORD's promised grace did for Abram, it also accomplishes for us today – moving us to say “No” to the world and our sinful flesh, as we pursue God's promised grace and blessing by faith.

“But how do I do that?” I sometimes wonder.

I often fall into the same sins that I know are wrong and I don't really want to do.<sup>ix</sup> The more I remind myself of God's commandments, the more I sin – adding guilt upon guilt.<sup>x</sup>

Why is that? It's because I fail to remind myself of God's promised grace!

If you see yourself in that struggle, take heart. The same LORD who saved every believer in the past also fully forgives you as you turn to Him in repentant faith. Jesus has wiped your record of failure clean – even the addictive sins against which you still struggle.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: do you want to know where to find the confidence you need to change your life? Do you want to know how to overcome the temptations that seem to keep entangling you in sin?

You find it in the same place Abram did: God's promised grace.

As the Scriptures say:

*“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. <sup>12</sup> It trains us to reject ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age.”<sup>xi</sup>*

Yes, God's promised grace - His promises to forgive, help, and bless us in Christ — gives us the power to act in faith like Abram. Grace is not only God's attitude toward us; it is also His power at work in us.

It empowers us to turn away from worldly passions. It sets our lives on a new path, moving us to persevere in all hope.

Part Three: Persevere in all hope.

We read that after arriving at the land to which God led him; <sup>6</sup>*Abram passed through the land until he came to the Oak of Moreh at the place called Shechem. The Canaanites were in the land at that time.*

Abram moved his tiny family based on God's promises. Imagine his concern when he came to the land and found it settled by wicked people, more numerous and stronger than he!

"This land is filled with people," the devil may have whispered. "Do you really think God can do what He promised and give an old man like you enough children to inherit this place?"

But the LORD didn't want Abram to waver in his faith. Therefore:

*<sup>7</sup>The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants."*

God reiterated His promise: Abram would have children, and his descendants would indeed inherit the land.

The LORD didn't tell Abram how or when this would happen. Why not? Because He wanted Abram to trust Him, which is precisely what God's promises moved him to do. We read:

*Abram built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. <sup>8</sup>He moved on from there to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent there, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and proclaimed the name of the LORD.*

Despite all the seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Abram persevered in his hope, trusting that the LORD would faithfully do what He said. That is why Abram seemed to build an altar wherever he moved. They were testimonies of his faith in the LORD's promises, no matter how bad things looked.

The altars also reminded Abram of God's greatest promise: one of his descendants would be the Saviour, through whose sacrifice all nations on earth would be blessed.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, life is not easy. There will be times when it seems as if God isn't keeping his promises.

Maybe you will lose your job and have no prospects for further employment. Will God really provide the daily bread He promised?

A loved one may battle a painful, terminal illness. Is the LORD really delivering us from evil when that happens?

You may struggle against an addictive sin like pornography, alcoholism, laziness, gossiping, or self-righteousness. Why does it seem as if the LORD allows you to face temptations beyond what you can bear?

Like Abram's life, our faith life is hard. But just as God came to Abram, so He comes to us through Word and Sacrament. He reminds us of His forgiving love, encouraging us to persevere in our hope.

As we look to Christ in repentant faith, the Holy Spirit comforts and strengthens us. His promises move us to build our own spiritual altars to the LORD: to call on Him in prayer and listen to His answer by meditating on His Word.

What do these “altars” look like? Maybe it’s 10 quiet minutes in the morning with your Bible and a cup of coffee before everyone wakes up. Maybe it’s a prayer in your car before you get to work, asking God to bless your day as you reflect His forgiving love in your life.

Like Abram, the Spirit moves us to call on His name wherever we are, looking for opportunities to share our faith with others to the glory of God’s gracious name.

Yes, the LORD’s amazing promises certainly move people to do amazing things. Rejoice in them – always taking them to heart, acting on His grace, and persevering in all hope.

Why? Because you know *the LORD is faithful to all his words and merciful toward all he has made*,<sup>xii</sup> as He has proven once and for all in the death and resurrection of His Son. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Cf. Psalm 34:8

<sup>ii</sup> Cf. Romans 4:16

<sup>iii</sup> Cf. Joshua 24:2

<sup>iv</sup> Cf. Acts 7:2-4

<sup>v</sup> Cf. 1 John 2:15-17

<sup>vi</sup> Cf. 2 Corinthians 6:15-18

<sup>vii</sup> Cf. Matthew 10:37

<sup>viii</sup> John 1:29 EHV

<sup>ix</sup> Cf. Romans 7:15-23

<sup>x</sup> Cf. Romans 7:7-12

<sup>xi</sup> Titus 2:11-12 EHV

<sup>xii</sup> Psalm 145:13 EHV